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United States Department of State

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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

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DECL: OADR

S/S LSG

TO: The Secretary

THROUGH: P - Mr. Tarnoff
G - Mr. Wirth

FROM: AF - Prudence Bushnell Acting

SUBJECT: Status of Rwanda Border Areas

SUMMARY

Concern is mounting regarding the security situation on Rwanda's borders. Militia networks are exercising increasing control in refugee camps in Zaire and Tanzania. Threats against non-governmental organization personnel have forced delays in food distribution and suspension of refugee registration in Zaire. Intimidation of would-be returnees continues. Inadequate food and water supplies are also fueling tensions. There is evidence of preparation by ex-FAR elements for some kind of military activity. If credible, we would anticipate an early preemptive strike against the ex-FAR by the RPA. A U.S. team will discuss options for preventive action with UN officials in New York on October 25.

DISCUSSION

In the past month, militia elements have increased their control of security and commodity distribution mechanisms in Rwandan refugee camps in both Zaire and Tanzania. Militia intimidation of would-be returnees continues, as do threats against expatriate workers, who have had to be withdrawn from camps in Zaire for security reasons on a number of occasions. Incidents of violence continue, fueled by militia activity, disinformation campaigns and in some camps, shortages of food and water.

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In Goma, the ex-Rwandan army (ex-FAR) has moved many of its troops to locations further west. Troop presence is less noticeable in Tanzania; some ex-FAR troops have moved from Goma down to Bukavu. Indications are mounting that ex-FAR command structures are intact and troops are training and/or preparing for some sort of move against Rwanda. While an all-out attack is unlikely, the ex-FAR is believed to have the capability to conduct unconventional military activity, to which the RPA is expected to respond forcefully. A preemptive strike by the RPA cannot be ruled out.

At an October 20 interagency meeting, a number of scenarios were reviewed which could precipitate a crisis in Rwanda in the short term. Participants decided that unconventional guerrilla activity by militia and ex-FAR or an explosion in the refugee camps were the most likely. A number of preemptive measures were discussed. An interagency team will meet with UN U/S Kofi Annan on October 25 to discuss these measures and to review the recommendations of a recent UN technical mission for dealing with the border security question.

Attachment:

Recent incidents in Border Refugee Areas

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